CHAPTER 5

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‘Dalit life’ is the source of Dalit literature. So, Dalit writers prefer to portray the dismal life of the Dalits; that is—anguish, trauma, atrocities, putrefy dignity and degraded status in society. The bases of Dalit literature lay in authentic presentation of Dalit society and self. The genres of poetry, short story, novel, autobiography, and play are used to present the Dalit world. These literary forms are used most effectively to establish Dalit identity.

5.1 Novels

Nowadays the genre of novel is one of the popular forms for writers to tell their stories. Likewise Dalit authors have also presented their anecdotes and tales by using novel form. Dalit writers from all states of India have enriched Dalit Literature. Dalit writers have presented Dalit milieu of their region faithfully in its actual condition. Dalit authors have presented realistically the Dalit world. Realism and authentic presentation of Dalit ambience are indispensable part of Dalit literature. But, above all Dalit life and Dalit culture are primary elements of Dalit Literature. In regional languages, a good numbers of Dalit novels are written. Dalit writers have presented their firsthand experiences in their novels. As a result, they are different from mainstream literature.
Bama is a celebrated Dalit woman writer. She has authentically presented in her works Dalit world in general and Dalit women in particular. Her novel *Sangati: Events* is a distinguished Dalit feminine work. Through her literary creations, she has presented Dalit feminine sensibility before the world. She has presented unknown milieu of Dalit women in her literary works.

*Sangati: Events* depicts the unconquerable strength of the Dalit woman against all odds and oppressions of the upper-caste Hindus. It is a different type of novel—unique in technique. Bama has represented everyday happenings in the Dalit community of south India. The novel *Sangati: Events* is avoiding the conventional plot structure by presenting a series of story. The novel presents Dalit sensibility too. The strong Dalit women are centre of the novel. How these women, against the cruel world of the non-Dalits stand firm and live with pride and dignity, is presented in the novel. In the Preface of *Sangati: Events*, Bama states:

In Sangati, many strong Dalit women who had the courage to break the shackles of authority, to propel themselves upwards, . . . Sangati is a look at part of the lives of those women who dared to make fun of the class in power that oppressed them. And through this, they found the courage to revolt.

(Bama vi)

The novel presents the lives of the Dalit women of two generations. The gender bias is commonly faced by the Dalit women right from her childhood to the last breathes of life.
This fact is very realistically narrated in the novel. The story starts with Vellaiyamma Kiahavi, the narrator’s paati (Grandmother). At the teenage, she got married to Govindan later on who deserted her life. She waits for a few years for Govidan. The waiting brings nothing but disappointment to the grandmother. But she is strong enough to live her life and take care of her children. She has taken off the “Mangalsutra”, a valuable ornament of a married woman. She has sold the Mangalsutra and has decided never to wear it again. And she becomes both father and mother to her children. It is considered as a rare act of courage of the Dalit woman. The bold step hers has changed world around her:

It seems paati waited and waited for Govindan to return, and at last, when there was a terrible famine, she took off her tali and sold it. After that she never wore a tali or geeli ever again. She told herself she had become a corpse without a husband and struggled single-handedly to care for her two children.

(Bama 5)

In the novel, Bama has presented clearly the difference between the life of a Dalit man and a Dalit woman. The Dalit men face oppressions physically and mentally by the non-Dalits where they work. Similarly, the same Dalit men exploit their females at home. Life is worse for Dalit women. Not only at home but also out side their home the conditions are not much different for the Dalit women. Dalit women have to do household work at home along with taking care of children. Then in the field, they have to do backbreaking work. In addition to that they have to face harassment of the landlords. Further, whether Dalit women want or not their bodies are enjoyed by their husbands. The husbands are caring only for their
own satisfaction and pleasure. Thus, the lives of the Dalit women are the most oppressed and miserable one. As a result, the Dalit women are the Dalit amongst Dalits:

From the moment they wake up, they set to work both in their homes and on the fields. At homes their husbands and children pester them; in the fields there is backbreaking work besides the harassment of the landlord. When they come home in the evening, there is no time even to draw breath. And once they have collected water and firewood, cooked a kanji and fed their hungry husband and children, even then they can’t go to bed in peace and sleep until drawn. Night after night they must give in to their husband’s pleasure. Even if a woman’s body is wrecked with pain, the husband is bothered only with his satisfaction. Women are overwhelmed and crushed by their own disgust, boredom, and exhaustion, because of all this. (59)

Another fact presented by the novelist is that Dalit girls are considered as inferior to Dalit boys in their families. ‘If a baby boy cries, he is instantly picked up and given milk. It is not so with girls . . . a boy is breast-fed longer. With girls, they wean them quickly, making them forget the breast.’ (7) Dalit girls have to take care of the house and household works. If mother is not well, she has to go for work. They hardly find time for playing. And if they, then it is only girls’ game they can play and not of boys like "kabadi" or "marbles".

Bama has presented that the condition is worse for the growing Dalit girls. They are living constantly under a fear of sexual molestation by the upper-caste men. Insecurity of the
young Dalit women is aptly presented through the words of *paati*, narrator’s grandmother in the novel. ‘Women should never come on their own to these parts. If upper-caste fellows clap eyes on you, you're finished.’ (8)

The story of Mariamma, narrator’s cousin, became a victim of sexual assault. Being a Dalit woman, she could not raise her voice and stand up against it. The non-Dalit landlord, Kumarasami made sexual advances on Mariamma. ‘He's upper caste as well. How can we even try to stand up to such people?’ (20) This shows that Dalit women live in constant fear of assault.

Bama has realistically presented the shameless cruelties of the upper-caste Hindus. When the *panchayathu*, the village court was set on for justice, Kumarasami made a false story that Mariamma and Manikkam, her uncle were using his fields to have fun. Mariamma raised her voice of protest against the lie of Kumarasami and told the truth. But whatever she said was considered false by the *panchayathu*. Further, she is humiliated before the village. Injustice of the non-Dalits is not stopped here and crosses the boundary of inhumanity when the *panchayathu* forced her to pay fine of Rs. 200 and Manikkam Rs. 100. Irony is that Manikkam has to pay Rs.100 because he is male. Dalit women face caste-based and gender-based discriminations. Thus, Bama shows on one hand how the Dalit women are more inferior to Dalit men and on the other the atrocities of the non-Dalits.

In this novel, Bama has presented the richness of the Dalit culture. Until now, the Dalit culture is ignored, unseen, and unrevealed to the world. The Dalit culture has very
prosperous heritage of performing arts, proverbs, folklore and folksongs. It has a very magnificent mythological world of gods, goddesses and demons. The language of the Dalits is rich, resourceful and quite different than that of the non-Dalits. It is an inborn talent in the Dalit women that they can sing spontaneously occasion-wise songs. This quality of the Dalit women is highlighted in the novel. Besides, Bama has presented the richness of the Dalit language:

I really don’t know how they could make up songs like that, in an instant, quick as anything . . . Thinking about, from birth to death, there are special songs and dances. And it’s the women who perform them . . . it is the women who sing them. (77-78)

This unknown cultural world of the Dalits, is advance in many traditions e.g. marriage. All the expenses of marriage will be done by the groom’s family and not by the bride. Unlike the non-Dalits tradition of dowry, in the Dalits’ world bride must given cash gifts by the groom in order to marry:

It’s certainly not like that in our streets. We give girls what we can afford . . . . The groom’s family will see to all the wedding expenses. We don’t have to give any money. It’s the groom who gives a cash gift and takes away and marries her. (112)
Modernity in the Dalit culture is visible in acceptance of widow remarriage in society. ‘That's the custom in our community.’ (113) The Dalit women consider themselves stronger than upper-castes women. They also think themselves superior to the non-Dalit women in the sense of doing the toughest work. Thus the Dalit women do have sense of earning money. By doing work, they financially support their family. They considered the non-Dalit women inferior in the field of the hard work:

Ask these upper caste women to do the work we do . . . to transplant paddy in the wet fields, to do the weeding, to reap the grain and carry it home. You'll see soon enough. They'll give it up in no time and go and lie down. (114-15)

The Dalit women consider that they are very lucky and freer than the orthodox upper-caste Hindu women. Even they made fun of the non-Dalit women. Unlike the orthodox Hindu women, Dalit women could act openly. Bama has authentically presented the inner world of the Dalit women to the world:

They are all scared-cats . . . . They can’t swim at all, that’s the truth. They stay at home, get a couple of buckets of water which they dip into and pour over themselves little by little. God knows how they manage to bathe in such small, small amounts of water. How different it is to go right under the water like this. (116)
In the case of humanity and colour of the skin, the Dalit women take pride and consciously considered themselves much better than to the upper-castes women. Here, Bama has analysed a belief of superiority of the Dalit women with pride. Further, she has presented a comparison between the Dalit and the non-Dalit women from viewpoint of the Dalit women. Thus, this comparison leads Bama to the final conclusion that the Dalit women are much better than the upper-castes Hindu women:

\[
\ldots \text{even if our children are dark-skinned, their features are good and there’s a } \\
\text{liveliness about them, Blake is strongest and best, like a diamond. Just go to } \\
\text{their streets and look about you. Yes, they might have light skins, but just take } \\
\text{a close look at their faces. Their features are all crooked and all over the place, } \\
\text{inside out and upside down. If they had our colour as well, not even a donkey } \\
\text{would turn and look at them. (114)}
\]

Thus, in *Sangati: Events* Bama has presented the worst mentality of the orthodox Hindus– to humiliate Dalits and treat them no better than animals. This mentality of the orthodox Hindus is protested and exposed with very firm and ground narration. The century-old pains and age-old sufferings of the Dalits are presented in the novel. Besides, the novel presents the Dalit women’s strong desire to live life with pride and dignity.

Joseph Macwan, an eminent Gujarati Dalit writer has enriched Guajarati Dalit literature through his writings. His masterpiece *The Stepchild (Angaliyat)*, the Sahitya Akademi award winner novel, depicts the struggle of Dalits of *Charotar* region of central
Gujarat for their existence and identity. The novel is about Dalits’ quest for identity and dignity. To live a dignified life the Dalit characters use law and order. It is based on one of the Dalit castes: the weaver community (*Vankar* community) lived in Kheda district. The way, Macwan narrates his story is remarkable. It is his sense of lifelike character portrayal and use of regional vernacular makes the novel valuable. This qualities of the novel brings Dalit Gujarati literature to a new altitudes. The female characters of the novels are more effective, strong, and who take charge of the action in the novel.

The novel opens with two Dalit friends Valji and Teeho who are conscious enough of their dignity. They are *Vankar* (weaver), one of the castes among Dalits, and live their lives by hand made cloths on loom. The Dalits have a good sense of business in the street and how to sale things in an open market. These very skills are presented through characters like Teeho, and Valji in the novel:

For the first time Teeho began his auction at this place. His usual place was the big bazaar in the town. He blossomed there, what with his gift of the gab that kept people rooted as he spoke. He assessed both people and time and knew when to stop. . . . with a voice clear as bell call out:

*Come buy! Come buy! Come buy!*

*Your crop will rejoice in my cloth*

*The tiniest grain will say*

*‘You’ve found an honest man.’*

*Check thrice if you will*

*Make sure of the cloth*

*Come buy my wares*
Try the cloth as a water bag,
Not a drop will fall through.
My heart and my soul in my weft and my warp (Macwan 10-11)

Their skills of selling cotton cloth earn Rs. 500/- to Rs. 700/- at the end of the day. They earn their livelihood through hard work.

The self-respect is another quality of Dalit *Vankar* (weaver) highlighted by Macwan in the novel. For the sake of Methi’s self-respect, Teeho jumps into the fight with Patel boys, upper-caste Hindus. Not only that Teeho teaches them lesson of life-time by beating them but also humiliates them before the crowd who witness the incident:

Teeho had taken up the cudgels before Valji could bring him round. A low-caste man publicly humiliating an upper-caste, a Patel no less! . . .

Without looking left or right, Teeho pounced on the man. As Teeha’s head rammed into his chest, he fell against the parapet wall. Before he could collect his breath, Teeho grabbed him by the collar and threw him to the ground. (16)

Many times such fighting happens between Dalits and non-Dalits in the novel that is a struggle for identity and self-respect. Macwan has presented that Dalits do not surrender at the cost of identity and dignity. Awareness of being a good citizen is also reflected. For their struggle, the Dalits follow the law and order, too. This is also presented in the novel through the victory of the Dalits and defeat the orthodox Hindus.
Manji and Nanio, the upper-caste Hindus who are beaten and taught lesson by the Dalit Teeha, design a plan to ruin life of Methi; so that Teeha suffers lifetime. On the other hand, Teeha and Valji take advice of Master who is having a little knowledge about law and order. Along with Master Teeha and Valji meet the Collector of Anand and explain the atrocities committed by the upper-caste Patel on Heera, the father of Methi. After listening to the fact about the incident, the collector solaces the Dalits that proper action will be taken. Accordingly actions are taken and non-Dalits are caught by police:

‘The village is struck dead!’

Why? What happened?

‘The inspector arrived with ten policemen and took Dehlavala and his nephew to the Taluka station.’ . . . . .

Methi had lodged a complaint against Nanji. They took the money that the Patidars kept offering. Amidst their pleading, Nanio was handcuffed and taken to the police station. (48)

Macwan has presented a clear message through the incident that Dalits are conscious enough and will not tolerate any type of atrocity. Even the orthodox and shallow minded Dehlavala, upper-caste Hindu politician had to face defeat twice at the hands of Dalit Teeha. This struggle is presented on the part of the non-Dalits as domination and survival with dignity on the part of the Dalits.

Novelist has presented a rich culture of the Dalit in the novel. The customs of Dalits are advanced regarding remarriage and widow marriage:
Like Valji, Bijal was also quite popular. And after all nothing new to this caste which accepted remarriages—marriages between brothers and sisters-in-law took place and widow remarriages also. (68)

The central Dalit character Methi first married to Chunthia, a drunkard and has son Gokal by name, openly declares that she will live for Teeha and will spend her entire life for taking care of Teeha. The community does not oppose and accepts the declaration of Methi:

‘I have followed this one (Teeha) openly, putting aside my marital status. The truth is that he saved my life, therefore now I must be in his service for the rest of my life. . .

‘Tonight I will stay with Kankuben, but from tomorrow please open up a different house for me, my penance of spending my life in your service will best be done from there.’ (183)

Use of Charotari dialect spoken by the Kheda Vankar (weaver) community is a distinctive element of the novel. Besides, use of regional dialect and the use of bitter tongue as used in day-to-day use in the Dalit community give authenticity on one hand and on the other expose the unique Dalit folk culture in the novel. The words or bitter tongue is truthfully narrated through Dalit characters like Kanku, Methi, and Jeevan and so on. When the crowd of non-Dalit is about to break on the house of the Dalit Jeevan, at that moment Kanku raised her voice against the non-Dalit crowd and her fury bursts into bitter tongue and action:
With her saree hitched up and the flaming torch still in her hand, Kanku ran behind, yelling:

‘Bloody bastards, I’ll die if I have to but let me get my hands on you, I’ll break your necks, sister-fuckers. Who do you think you are?’ (195-96)

Similarly, the use of bitter tongue has presented by the character of Knaku, a close companion of Methi when she encounters with policeman who searches the house to arrest Teeha, Dana, and Jeevan. Kanku furiously scolds policeman for his misbehaviour with Dalit women:

‘Sisterfu.....! Get lost, or else I’ll pull you by the hair and arrest you.’

Without looking left or right, Kanku lifted the spade used for picking up cow dung:

‘You sisterfucker! You dare talk to me like this. Will you get off my house or should I hit you with this?’ (198)

Thus, Mackwan has highlighted his Dalit characters by depicting them with their distinctive oral-tongue. About the use of this quality of Dalits’ culture, in the introduction of the novel Achyut Yagnik has remarked, is apt:

*Angaliyat (The Stepchild)* is one of the few exceptional cases of bridging the spoken and the written word. This departure from the ‘official’ linguistic register is only one of the many leaps that *Angaliyat (The Stepchild)* made . . .

(Yagnik xi)
The novel is also remarkable for Mackwan’s characterisation of female portrait. He has a fame of creating lifelike characters. His female portrayals are strong and active in action. Methi is presented with strong determination in her action and at the same time a bold personality who does not hesitate nor does afraid in taking charge against non-Dalits’ atrocities. Her husband Chunthia is a drunkard, an opium eater, and a gambler. She transforms him into a gentleman by her loving and affectionate nature. Besides, she is a courageous woman who does not tolerate any injustice. For the sake of what is right, she is just ready to fight with all her might:

The swindlers could not stand up to Methi. She did not merely retrieve the field, but also had it ploughed. Chunthia graduated to being Chunthabhai, such was the effect of his transformation. He began to eat regularly twice a day. He even got his share of opium effortlessly. Humiliation and insults had made him impervious, but Methi’s warmth and care awakened his sensitivity again. Gradually, Methi adorned him with human qualities. (Macwan 158)

*The Stepchild,* as a Dalit novel focuses on the issue of the struggle of identity throughout the novel. The major and minor characters of the novel are continuously struggling for their identity and rights. The central figure, Teeha and his friend Valji even lost their lives for the sake of their struggle but never bow down or surrender to the atrocities of the non-Dalits. Rather they forcefully strike back to defend their dignity and to establish their identity. In one such encounter with upper-caste Patel Sarpanch, Teeha boldly fights for his right but in the end before two policemen he was beaten to death by eight to ten non-Dalits. Instead of taking action against the non-Dalits, the policemen beat mercilessly:
The same Teeha humiliated the Patidars more than once. . . Without looking left or right, the mukhi’s stick came down upon him.

Teeha ducked, and caught hold of the stick. In that tug-of-war, the mukhi faced defeat and embarrassment. . . Eight to ten young men came crashing down upon Teeha. With sticks and punches, they left Teeha half-dead. Two policemen were seated in the square. They dragged Teeha there and beat the remaining life out of his body and threw the bloodied body outside. (226)

Thus, *The Stepchild* is a saga of pain and suffering on both levels: personal and general. At personal level the lovers Teeha and Methi did not live together because of the cunning conspiracy of the non-Dalit. Outrage with the mean sense of revenge, the upper-caste Patel spoiled the life of Methi to make Teeha to suffer. At general level, the upper-caste Patel could not tolerate defeat at the hands of the Dalits. So having power, position and money in hand, the non-Dalits tried all they could do so that Dalits could not gain economically as well as politically.

The sacrifice of Teeha and Valji, for dignity and identity does not go in vain. The sense of dignity and self-respect and struggle for identity is carried further by the younger generation Gokal, son of Methi and Chunthia. He walks on the path shown by Teeha and tries to establish identity. The end of the novel is very optimistic one. The non-Dalit Dehlavala becomes minister. He declares to establish high school in the village. For the same, donation is required. So Dehlavala announces that ‘a marble plaque bearing the name of the donor would be placed in the front yard for any donation of five thousand and one rupees.’ (235) Gokal spoke loud and clear Rs. 7001/-:
Standing at some distance, Gokal spoke up: ‘Rupees seven thousand and one from me.’ . . .

The man noting things down asked: ‘In whose name, bhai?’

Gokal proudly answered:

‘In the name of Teehabhai Gopalbhai Parmar!’ (235)

Thus, The Stepchild is a fiction of pain and suffering ending in the beginning of the establishment of Dalit identity. On the whole, the suffering and struggle for establishment of an identity is in the end begins.

Daxa Damodra, Dalit Sahitya Academi Prize and Parishad Prize winner novelist for her first novel Shosh (2003) has presented her great respect for historical characters and history. So in her work historical characters are enlivened. Her second novel Savitri (2008) is a feminist historical Dalit novel. It is based on life of a great Dalit couple Jotirao Phule and Savitri. The external struggle and internal sufferings, pain and sorrows of Phule couple are interwoven in the novel. The novel shows how Savitri got education in time where even Dalit boys were not permitted for education as freely as today. The transformation from a housewife to a teacher, woman to a strong revolutionary is narrated with help of facts and imagination.

By presenting the historical characters of Jotirao Phule and Savitri, Daxa Damodara has presented today’s need of such leaders. At the same time, she has highlighted these great personalities who started school for Dalit girls when the upper-caste orthodox in general and Brahmins in particular wanted to lock the women in the four walls. These shallow-minded Brahmins wanted women to deprive of their liberation.
Novel opens the worst mentality of the orthodox Hindus. It is presented through the character of Yashvant, an adopted son of Savitri and Phule. The 19th century Indian atmosphere is recreated in the novel. He reported it to his mother Savitri:

“It is unfortunate that still the people consider the army establishments are wicked rather than plague, that tries to cure the people from plague. Especially, the Plague Commissioner.”

. . . “People are dying yet they are not ready to leave illusion of caste-based discrimination....!” (Damodara 2)

Savitri’s strong personality on one hand and on the other supportive attitude is presented by the novelist. She is very optimistic character who fuses a ray of optimism in Phule, her husband; when he lost faith in struggle for identity and dignity:

“Turn the fire of insult (you have) in heart into the torch of revolution, Swami.....!”

“Identify the root of your pain, swami....! And to eradicate it, choose the path of construction rather than destruction.” (9-10)

The path of revolution ignited in Phule by Savitri turns him into a leader and revolutionary; who decided to uproot inequality prevailed into society. To do so he starts revolution from his own home. He explains Savitri the importance of education to eradicate the caste based discrimination.
It was the time, when education for the Dalit was not permissible by the orthodox Hindus. In such a period, Phule decided to educate his wife first then the downtrodden. His action created the storm among the orthodox Hindus.

The writer has depicted Jotirao’s portrayal is as a visionary. He has devoted his entire life for the sake of his struggle for dignity, identity and to remove ignorance and superstitions. He has created desire for education in his wife. He educates her to play a very crucial role in society for Dalit girls’ education. He also prepares Savitri to fight against religion-based superstitions and ignorance prevailed in society.

Phule gets support from his Brahmin friends and well-wishers that are modern in their thinking. One such name is Tattya Saheb who gives permission to use his premise to open school for Dalit girls. Thus, credit goes to Mahatma Phule to establish the first school for girls. Indirectly, Phule’s rational-thinking Brahmin friends have helped him for his struggle against brahminism i.e. based on inequalities, superstitions, discriminations, and domination.

By starting school for girls he starts a revolutionary movement for women’s liberation. This visionary action of Phule is not tolerated by orthodox Hindus; and designs a wicked plan to excommunicate all those who support Phule. So one after another non-Dalit friends of Phule leave him alone. Further, the group of orthodox Brahmins goes to Dalits’ houses to threaten them and gives ultimatum not to send girls to the school.

In such an odd time, Phule does not give up the movement. Rather, he comes forward with another bold step. He gives responsibility of teaching to Savitri. This is the turning point
in Savitri’s life. This is the very moment, from an ordinary house wife; Savitri is transformed into a revolutionary.

But the path chosen by Savitri is not easy one. She stands against centuries old prejudiced notions of orthodox Hindus’ caste-based discrimination, superstitions, and women’s liberation. Not only she stands against orthodoxy but she takes first step to eradicate this caste-based discrimination by accepting a duty to educate Dalit girls. To stop her, the shallow-minded Brahmin women try their best to torture her by taunting her now and then, while she is going to teach the Dalit girls. Out of fear Savitri hesitates to continue on her mission to identity, dignity and liberation. Phule supports her by every means: as a husband, friend, and as a teacher in such dilemma of Savitri that is to go to school or not to teach. And she understands the important role she has to play on the road to revolution:

“I’ll go to teach. Even though the whole world will become hurdle . . .
You are with me; truth and knowledge are with me, why should I afraid of anyone?” (30)

Knowing that Savitri is not ready to give the path she has chosen; the orthodox Brahmins come forward to torture her psychologically. But she has promised to her husband to perform the assigned duty, however odd it would be. On the other hand, the orthodox non-Dalits are also in mood to stop Savitri by hook or crook. They psychologically torture her by taunting everyday. They also torture her physically by throwing cow-dung and dirt on her. On the contrary, Savitri is prepared enough to teach lessons to the orthodox Hindus:
Then, it was daily routine . . . opponents threw cow-dung and dirt on Savitri when she passed through the road. . .

Savitri’s burning eyes . . . a vigorous slap dashed on the cheeks by Savitri on the person who was trying to mischief was an answer of centuries old atrocities of Shudars, Untouchables and of women. (34-35)

Further, the orthodox Brahmins like Radhopant, Vishambharji, Jagganathi, Keshavraam, and other go to Govindrao, Jyotirao’s father to warn him about Savitri’s teaching work. They tell Govindrao that education is only for the upper-caste Brahmin and not for the Dalits. Their shallow mentality is exposed when they do not want Savitri to play the role of elite teacher. So they do not care what they are saying and in which manner. Radhopant said:

Just as a cow needs fresh grass everyday
Likewise an educated woman needs a new man everyday. (37)

They also torture Govindrao using religion as their weapon. The wicked mentality of the so called religious Brahmin is exposed by the novelist. Keshavraam threatens Govindrao:

“. . . and once you got excommunicate from society, keep in mind Govindrao . . . you will not have four people to hold your funeral bier . . .” (38)

When Phule and Savitri come to home after completing school-teaching, Govindrao has strictly given choice to them that either left teaching or the home. Further his tongue utters
the words of the non-Dalits as they threatened him. On the other hand Phule tries his best to explain the importance of education to his father but could not succeed:

“If you want to stay in this house, you’ve to give up the thought of teaching of girls, and Mahar-Mang.” . . .

“Why? Arre, sin, it is sin, we all go to hell.”

“. . . Education isn’t of hell’s, but it is a way to escape hell. The society which is rotting alive in the hell, its liberation’s remedy is education.” (39)

As Govindrao remains firm in his decision Phule and Savitri have to leave home. In the evening, when they do not know where to go they sit under the tree outside the town. When this news is heard by Usman Sheikh, friend of Phule, he takes them to his home. Further, out of money crisis Phule has to close the school, he started. But after a short period, one of Phule’s friends Sadashiv helps him by finding a place at Old Ganj Pethe for school. His friend Vishnupant also agrees to teach at school. Thus, once again the orthodox upper-caste Hindus in general and shallow-minded Brahmins in particular are defeated.

Phule’s contribution for girls’ education is appreciated by the English people too. The British Government is also interested in reformation. They take many reformative actions against inhuman codes, customs and practices especially regarding women. Phule’s radical thoughts and actions are appreciated and honoured in a programme by the British. Phule gives credit of his great movement to his wife and gives his honour to her in the special programme. His action stuns everybody present there. His speech jolts the orthodox Hindus. On the other hand, history proves that Phule and Savitri are forerunner of new era of women education in particular and Dalits’ education in general:
This honour in a sense is the first step of our desire to break age old chains of slavery of Dalits, disgusted and exploited. At this moment of the first stage, I, in the presence of all cannot forget to remember the one who is architecture of my achievement. . . . In a true sense, if there is anyone who deserves this honour is Savitri. Entire hall remained stunned. . . Honours to a Shudra, insult to entire Brahmin society. (56-57)

The appreciation and honour to him, further bitterer the conflict between the Dalits and non-Dalits.

The family life of Phule and Savitri is interwoven with love, care, understanding, pain, suffering, and sacrifice. Savitri is ready to give up her personal liking and disliking for the sake of Phule’s movement for dignity, identity and liberation. In time of despair both work hard to make each other happy. They do not have their own child. So Savitri suggests Phule to get marry second time. Phule is not ready to get marry second time for the sake of child. In his reply Phule rejects the notion by saying that ‘you have given birth to the new age.’ (93) Thus, they aptly are called the pair made in heaven. The character of Savitri is presented as a “Mother of the World”. While Phule is ill at the end part of the novel, their emotional attachment, care, and love are presented:

If you were not (in my life) . . . Then I . . . , I wouldn’t either.

My life’s story would be incomplete without you, Savitri . . . (151)
During the 19th century, on the name of religion in Indian society inhuman practices and superstitions were practiced by orthodox non-Dalits. Phule and Savitri wanted to remove them. As a result, they established ‘Satya Shodhak Samaj’. The members of the ‘Satya Shodhak Samaj’ believed in the principle: ‘God is one and He loves everyone equally.’ (105) Functions of the society are to spread knowledge and truth. Mostly the superstitions based on religion and God of the orthodox Hindu society are criticised and explained values of humanity.

Savitri suggests Phule to take proper steps to stop infanticides. This is resulted in establishment of ‘Bal Hatya Prabandhak Gruh’. To make aware the society, the pamphlets are distributed in the town. This propaganda creates excitement among the shallow minded Brahmins. As usual this radical action is not welcomed by the orthodox Brahmins. They criticise harshly the action of Phule. When women who are helping Savitri in managing this orphanage, tell about the harsh criticism of the orthodox Hindus makes Savitri depress. But Phule always supports and encourages her:

“The path of revolution is the heap of gunpowder, yet those who think of new–creation never step back, and do not make room for dilemma.” . . .

It is an exceptional orphanage in India.”(100)

Another hardship of untouchables is presented in the novel. The untouchables have to suffer a lot for drinking water. This problem of untouchables is noticed by Savitri. So, Phule is suggested by Savitri to open their backyard well for the untouchable for drinking water. Once again, this news not only excites the orthodox but also surprises the untouchables.
Before this event the untouchables had never fetched water by themselves. Thus Savitri’s suggestions, one after another implemented as reforms by the ‘Satya Shodhak Samaj’.

During the famine time because of a little rain, people are dying. Even people are selling their infants in Rs. 4/- or Rs. 5/-. Further, the non-Dalits believe the condition is nothing but out come of the sins of social reformers and the British government. Novelist has presented the irrational beliefs of the orthodox community:

Large upper caste flock firmly believes that this famine is the fruit of sins of Shudras’ and Untouchables’ education with upper castes; health and other facilities given in British reign. (110)

Unlike the shallow-minded Hindus, the devoted Phule and Savitri always try their level best to find the solutions of the problems. They start ‘Anna Kshetra’ for children. Conditions are getting worse day by day yet the rich hoarders are not ready to give grains. So, Phule goes to Magistrate with a large crowd to complaint about it. Likewise, the Magistrate takes actions and grains are distributed among the people at very low price. Victory of the ‘Satya Shodhak Samaj’ is the victory of human values.

To present truth Phule’s ‘Satya Shodhak Samaj’ is continuously working. Marriage ceremonies, funerals, and other occasions are done without Brahmins. This is not possible before Phule’s vision of social awareness. Gradually, Phule’s awareness mission is getting positive responses not only from Dalits but also from humanitarian Hindus. When upper-caste Hindus have not paid attention for the higher education for Dalits before “Hunter
Commission”, Savitri and Phule are disappointed. Their anguish is aptly presented in the novel:

“Primary education and . . . education for lowered classes”

These two are the indispensable necessity for India’s rise up. . . (117)

Phule understands point of Savitri and drafts a letter to represent the need of higher education for Dalits and hands over to the Commission.

Phule’s movement for liberation, dignity and identity moves on but as he is getting old, he cannot participate as actively as before. Savitri worries about Phule’s health. Rather, Phule suggests her to focus on the movement:

Savitri . . . !

Whether I live or die . . . our efforts to eliminate century old ignorance will not put off, for that won’t you keep lighted the lamp of education, Savitri?

Say . . . Savitri . . . answer (me)”

“Yes . . . Swami . . . Yes . . .!” (155)

Savitri undertakes this responsibility with the same sprit of Phule. But, Phule’s death makes her alone. This loss makes her weak for a while. But she continues the mission started by Phule. At the time of plague she works for the social equality in the camp. Novel ends with Savitri’s death and the legacy to continue the struggle for liberation, dignity and identity is passed on Yashvant:
“My son . . .! Do not forget our aim, to light the darkness.

True India lies in ignorance and poverty.

Until their lives would be lighted by education’s light, ignorance won’t go away from India’s destiny . . .! ” (164)

Thus, Daxa Damodra, a Gujarati Dalit novelist has depicted the revolutionary movement to eradicate the age of ignorance, superstitions, discrimination, and inequality. In addition, the personal life and public life of Savitri and Jotirao Phule are balanced well in the novel. On one hand the novelist has presented the feminine world of a woman through the character of Savitri and on the other a leader and a revolutionary. Different aspects of Savitri’s personality like an ideal woman, a wife, a mother, a teacher and a leader are presented without twisting the historical facts by the novelist.

Ajay Navaria, a Hindi Dalit novelist has written his first novel, People From That Side (Udhar Ke Log). In it he has depicted the struggle of Dalits to establish their identity being human along with common Dalit presentations of pain, sufferings, trauma, humiliations, and discriminations. Besides, the purpose of this novel is to present Dalit consciousness. The novel is the result of the firsthand experiences being Dalit by the novelist. In his own words, he remarks:

I chose to write about Dalit consciousness. I have felt myself treated like this many times. (Buncombe The Rise)

The first Tamil Dalit woman writer and an I. A. S. officer, Sivakami’s, The Grip of Change (Pazhiyana Kazhidalum) is the first Tamil Dalit novel. It presents harsh reality of the
Dalit world on one hand and on the other exhibits the need of empowerment of Dalits in the field of politics with powerful young leadership. The fiction moves around 17 years old female protagonist. At the same time, the fiction, divulges the issue of Dalit men's violent treatment to Dalit women at home. In the novel, the novelist has presented her vision of empowered Dalits. She is of opinion that to corroborate the social justice and equality the young Dalits have to educate and unite themselves. The fiction criticises Dalit Movement on one hand and on the other the patriarchal system of India.

Sivakami’s second novel, *The Taming of Women (Aanandayee)* presents the Dalit women’s dual oppressed condition. How the Dalit women in the non-Dalits’ world exploited physically, sexually, and mentally and at home how forcefully controlled and set aside by the Dalit men. Thus the dual oppressed life, a Dalit woman lives. It is indeed extremely pitiable. This novel is the first attempt of Dalit feminine sensibility. The novel exposes the discrimination between men and women. The author has used aspect of humour in a very effective manner which makes ordinary thing amusing one.

Thus, Dalit writers have used the novel form to present the Dalit socio-cultural realities, Dalit life, Dalit experiences and Dalit sensibility. Dalit writers have presented Dalit world authentically. Dalit writers have become the voice of the oppressed Indians. Thus, Dalit writers try to establish Dalit identity.

**5.2 Autobiographies:**

In the history of world literature and Indian literature, Dalit autobiography is a new and different experience for the readers. It is different in its presentation i.e. the Dalit
autobiographers give first importance to objective narration and then to subjective voice-over. Thus, the first thing observed in Dalit autobiographies is the presentation of the social life and next is the narration of firsthand experiences of the authors. The use of regional dialect is one of the distinctive elements of the Dalit autobiography. The fundamental purpose of the Dalit autobiographers is the emancipation of the Dalits. Thus, it differs in its aim. Dalit autobiographies are revolutionary writings that punch on the face of hypocrites, pretentious unequal society of the non-Dalits.

*The Outcaste*, *(Akkarmashi)*, *Growing Up Untouchable in India* *(Vasti)*, *The Weave of My Life* *(Aydaan)*, *Joothan*, *The Branded* *(Uchalya)*, *Baluta*, *Ooru Keri*, *Changiya Rukh: Against the Night*, etc. are the leading Dalit autobiographies. They present authentic and realistic scenario of the Dalit and non-Dalit life. These autobiographies have jolted and excited the world by realistic portrayal of the phoney-dignity of Indians i.e. India is one of the greatest democracies of the world. The Dalit autobiographers have exposed India by showing the world that even after constitution of India has strictly prohibited untouchability; is still practiced in India by the orthodox Hindus. Besides, they have unmasked the hypocrisy of the orthodox Indians who frequently say that there is unity in diversity in India by presenting casted based discriminations.

The Marathi Dalit autobiography writer Sharankumar Limbale’s autobiography *The Outcaste: Akkarmashi* is a mouthpiece of the Mahar community. It is translated in English by Santosh Bhoomkar. The trauma, pain, sorrows, humiliation, and sufferings being the Dalit are beyond any other regret in the world. And the same sting more intensely when a person is half-caste i.e. mother is Dalit and father is upper-caste Hindu. In Marathi it is called *Akkarmashi*. 
The autobiography begins with the glimpse of the poverty when along with the autobiographer other Dalit and non-Dalit classmates went to picnic from school. The boys and girls came with their lunch box so was the writer. Here, the differences between the food of the Dalits and non-Dalits were narrated by Limbale. The food of the non-Dalits was tasty with variety and that was good enough to satisfy their hunger and nothing more. He has depicted his extreme poor condition. They did not have enough food because of poverty. As a result he and his family members had to be half-fed:

My stomach was like a way to the graveyard that continuously swallows the dead. My mother Masamai used to shout angrily, ‘What is it you have, a stomach or Akkalkot? . . . I always felt half-fed. Whatever was given I ate greedily and nothing was ever enough. . . I felt I had swallowed the whole land and was chewing stones. (Limbale 2-3)

Dalit Literature is a stamp of authenticity in voice-over of untouchability and poverty in coarse language used by the Dalits. The overwhelming hunger is one of the challenges of everyday faced by the autobiographer and young Dalits children. This basic need of human beings is frequently presented in the book. Limbale thus narrates philosophic presentation of food:

God endowed man with a stomach. . . . Man then went to God and said, ‘Oh God, you made a mistake by giving me just one stomach. . . .

Since then man has been striving to satisfy his stomach. Filling even one stomach proved difficult for him. He began to live with a half-filled one. He survived by swallowing his own saliva. He went for days without eating
anything. He started selling himself for his stomach. A woman becomes a whore and a man a thief. The stomach makes you clean shit; it even makes you eat shit. (8)

Poverty compels Dalits to steal food. But this stealing is to satisfy their hunger; and it does not for habit or fun. The Dalits steal to eat whereas the upper-caste Hindus for their fun and habit. Both steal yet the Dalits are called criminal for their stealing and the non-Dalits are called leaders for the stealing. How just is that? This difference is realistically depicted in the autobiography:

On Wednesday, market day . . . used to steal from the market were eatables. . . Who steals out of habit? The poor steal for the sake of hunger. If they had enough to eat would they steal? Black marketers become leaders, whereas those who are driven to steal by hunger are considered criminals. (21)

Another episode of extreme poverty is narrated in the autobiography. Generally people do not like dung of the animal. Even the thought to eat food prepared out of undigested grain of the dung of animal, create disgust in minds. In this autobiography, the writer presents fact about Dalits’ extreme poverty. During the harvest season cattle gazed in the field and passed undigested grain of jowar in dung. Santamai picked up the lump of dung washed in the river water; and remaining jowar was used to made ‘bhakaris’ to eat. Its taste was like dung. Such an experience of miserable and pathetic condition of Dalits could not be presented faithfully ever by any non-Dalit writer:
The bhakaris made from the jowar picked out of the dung looked coarse but spicy. She normally refused to give them to me but on that day I quarreled and demanded some. I put a piece in my mouth and chewed it slowly. I stank of dung. As I chew it, I felt I was actually eating dung. . .

Santamai was used to eating such bhakari. It was like pushing garbage into a furnace, feeding it fire. Santamai ate those bhakais as a matter of course . . . (11)

The memoir presents the worst experience of his childhood. In this autobiography, the inhuman behavior of the teacher deeply damaged the tender psyche of the writer. The teacher told to write an essay on picnic. The upper-caste students were busy in writing essay but the narrator could not understand what to write in the essay. Before he started to write anything the teacher shouted at him in an abusive language. This experience of being Dalit was very painful to the writer. The humiliation and insult jolted the writer:

When the teacher noticed me, apparently doing nothing, he grew annoyed and shouted, ‘You son of a bitch, come on, start writing! You like eating ox, don’t you?’ . . . I didn’t know how and what to write. . . , and the teacher calling me a son of a bitch and a beef-eater. How should I start writing the essay my teacher had asked for? (3-4)

Limbale did not prefer the work of collecting the dung and smearing dung on wall. But, the work which the author never did at home; he was forced to do the same work in the school by the teachers. Inhumanity and humiliation felt by the autobiographer was quite rare
as a Dalit boy to the world. But it is the rare caste-system of the Hindus which forced him and his community to do such work:

On Saturdays the teacher asked us to smear the floor and walls with cow-dung paste. The teacher had a particular admiration for me because I was an expert in gathering dung and smearing it evenly. At home I wouldn’t do even the smallest chore, but in the school on Saturdays I was made to do this duty that was allotted to me. A man from my community had to carry out such duties in the village for the high-caste people. (4)

Unlike the author, his Dalit friend Parshya has angry personality. And his bitterness against the orthodox and shallow-minded Hindus was burst on the idol of the upper-caste Hindus’ God. He pissed on the icon of the Bhutalsidh temple. Even at the tender age, the anger is fused in the Dalits which sometimes come out in such reaction:

I still remember how Parshya once pissed on the sacred icon of the Bhutalsidh temple. Parshya was a very bitter boy. . . . That rascal had recklessly pissed on God. (4)

Humiliation and indifferent dealings towards the Dalits is commonly experienced by the Dalits. Limbale had the same experience when he went to barber Isunath to get his hair cut. The author wanted to get his hair cut not free; but by paying money. But he was humiliated and insulted loudly by Isunath barber. The same barber used to shave buffaloes in the village. However, the barber can shave the buffaloes but could not cut hair of the Dalit boy:
The barber first looked at me and at my head. He shouted, ‘Don’t stand here. I am not going to shave your head.’ I showed him my money in order to convince him. A customer from a different village who was getting his hair cut felt some sympathy for me. He asked me to sit down and take my turn. At that the barber, Isunath, got wild, ‘He is a Mahar. Let him go.’ How could this barber, who used to shave buffaloes in the village, refuse to shave my head? (22)

Sharankumar Limbale is a Dalit among the Dalits because he is born as ‘Akkarmashi’. As a scholar Dalit, Limbale has narrated his traumas and sufferings in the form of questions. As being a human, he cannot tolerate the inhuman behaviours of the non-Dalits and of the fellow Dalits. In the three different ways he experiences humiliations. First, as an illegitimate son; secondly as an outcaste; and third as an educated Dalit who is intelligent and economically sound in his community. Yet he is prohibited to step up in the rigidly established Indian caste-system. Limbale asks questions which are good enough to explain the trauma and anguish of the autobiographer:

My first breath must have threatened the morality of the world. . . Why did my mother say yes to the rape which brought me into the world? . . . How many eyes must have humiliated her because they considered her a whore? Did anyone distribute sweets to celebrate my birth? Did anyone admire me affectionately? Did anyone celebrate my naming ceremony? Which family would claim me as its descendants? Whose son am I, really? (36-37)
It is very clearly understood that the exceptional and intense trauma, pain, sorrows and sufferings that had been experienced by Sharankumar Limbale. Further, his words are authentic enough to let feel pain of the Dalit writer. In *Author’s Note*, Limbale has stated:

My history is my mother’s life, at the most my grandmother’s. My ancestry does not go back any further.

My mother is an untouchable, while my father is a high caste from one of the privileged classes of India. Mother lives in a hut, father lives in a mansion. Father is a landlord; mother, landless. I am an *akkarmashi* (half-caste). I am condemned, branded illegitimate. (ix)

Similarly, the writer’s stamp of authenticity is visible in the presentation of firsthand experiences of his life in the autobiography. The writing of Limbale is marked with simplicity. He is humiliated by the Dalits and non-Dalits because he is born by village Patil. As a result, the fellow Dalits’ humiliation twinges like scorpion’s stings to him more than that of the upper-caste kids. He feels like he is being stabbed millions time. In *Author’s Note*, Limbale has written:

I have put in words the life I have lived as an untouchable, as a half caste, and as an impoverished man. There is a Patil in every village who is also a landowner. He invariably has a whore. I have written this so that readers will learn the woes of the son of a whore. High-caste people look upon my community as untouchable, while my own community humiliated me, calling me ‘akkarmashi’. This humiliation was like being stabbed over and over again. (Limbale ix-x)
Dr. Ambedkar has frequently emphasised the importance of education for Dalits. As a result, the Dalits can express their own firsthand experiences of being Dalits. Limbale represents the quality of the Dalits being human. As he can feel sufferings and traumas of the rape victims of any part of India because his mother was also victimised woman. This very quality is reflected when he says:

I regarded the immorality of my father and mother as a metaphor for rape... It is through the Dalit movement and Dalit literature that I understood that my mother was not an adulteress but a victim of a social system. I grow restless whenever I read about a rape in the newspaper. A violation anywhere in the country, I feel, is a violation of my mother. (Limbale ix)

Thus, saga of pain and suffering is presented in the autobiography Outcast: Akkarmashi. The autobiography is an authentic picture of socio-cultural and socio-economic realities of Dalits. Dalit sensibility is found throughout the autobiography.

Om Prakash Valmiki’s Hindi Dalit autobiography Joothan is another example of intense pain, suffering, humiliation being a Dalit. The firsthand experiences being the Dalit are beyond verbal and written expression. The sufferings, pains, atrocities, insults, inequality etc. are witnessed and experienced throughout their lives by the Dalits. So the authentic presentations of the firsthand experiences are found in the Dalit writings. “Thus, Joothan is a narration,” Pradeep Sharma remarks, “of one’s own life and its struggle depicting what it means to be a member of the Dalit community, what is the level of exploitation, discrimination and how difficult is the struggle for equality and dignity.” (Sharma P. 134)
In his preface Om Prakash Valmiki, the Dalit writer has revealed the alien attitudes of the upper-castes towards the Dalits. The inhuman approaches of the orthodox Hindus and firsthand experiences of being a Dalit let Valmiki compose his autobiography *Joothan*, which is an attempt of protest against the atrocities of the orthodox Hindus. The autobiography writer has noted in his preface:

DALIT LIFE is excruciatingly painful, charred by experiences. Experiences that did not manage to find room in literary creations. We have grown up in a social order that is extremely cruel and inhuman. And compassionless towards Dalits. (Valmiki vii)

Mr. Valmiki also believes in Dr. Ambedkar’s philosophy that through education Dalits can improve their position into this dehumanised society-system of the upper-castes. The most appealing and realistic literary piece *Joothan* begins with anguished experiences of Valmiki’s childhood. The author was born and passed his childhood in poverty and in an unhygienic small village of Muzaffarnagar district in Western Uttar Pradesh. The common humiliation that every Dalit experiences throughout his lifetime is experienced by author during his school life.

First, he got difficulty in getting admission in school and then he forced by teachers to clean school ground. As a result, the author could not attend the classes. Unlike others, the author was lucky enough that his father came forward for his protest. His father’s sense of self-dignity is the reason that his father is a hero to him. It was his father who always encouraged him to study. When the headmaster compelled the author to sweep the playground for three days and did not permit him to attend classroom, the author complained
about it to his father. The father supported the author and played a role of a hero. Valmiki was indebted to his father for such a brave action:

Pitaji snatched the broom from my hand and threw it away. . . He began to scream, ‘Who is that teacher, that progeny of Dronacharya, who forces my son to sweep?’

Pitaji’s voice had echoed through the whole school. . . I have never forgotten the courage and the fortitude with which my father confronted the headmaster that day. Pitaji had all sorts of weaknesses, but the decisive turn that he gave my future that day has had a great impact on my personality.

(Valmiki 6)

Along with his father, his mother was also a source of inspiration to him who has protested against the practice of inhuman attitudes of eating left food in marriage. Valmiki’s mother was moved by humiliation of the upper-caste orthodox Sukhdev Singh. It was the time of Sukhdev daughter’s marriage. Guests had taken their meal. So author’s mother asked for left food for her children. For this Sukhdev had insulted her. But that day Valmiki’s mother had rejected to be a sufferer being a Dalit. Rather she had played a role of hero and denied to be bullied by the non-Dalits. This bold action of his mother made very significant effect on author’s personality. Valmiki’s mother did not want food at the cost of dignity:

That night . . . the first time I saw my mother get so angry. She emptied the basket right there. She said to Sukhdev Singh. ‘Pick it up and put it inside your house. Feed it to the baratis [Guests] tomorrow morning.’ . . . Sukhdev
Singh had pounced on her to hit her, my mother had confronted him like a lioness. Without being afraid.

After that day Ma never went back to his door. And after this incident she had also stopped taking their joothan. (11)

Author was thankful for such attitudes to his parents. Valmiki’s parents taught him to fight for dignity. Valmiki’s father was the source of Valmiki’s inspiration to study hard. He told Valmiki, ‘You have to improve the caste by studying.’ (29)

Om Prakash Valmiki came in touch with the literature of Premchand, Rabindranath Tagore and other mainstream writers when he was in standard VIII. Studying the literature of the mainstream, author finds it unsatisfactory as the non-Dalits’ literature does not give a realistic view of life. He raised a question to the teacher that why no epic poet had ever mentioned the Dalits, or written anything about the Dalits? Instead of giving answer, the teacher got angry and out of anger he had beaten Valmiki for his curiosity. :

. . . ‘Chuhre ke, you dare compare yourself with Dronacharya . . . Here, take this, I will write an epic on your body.’ He had rapidly created an epic on my back with the swishes of his stick. That epic is still inscribed on my back. Reminding me of those hated days of hunger and hopelessness, this epic composed out of a feudalistic mentality is inscribed not just on my back but on each nerve of my brain. (23)

This type of atrocities is commonly experienced by Dalits. This atrocity of the orthodox non-Dalit teacher had filled Valmiki with anger. Further, Valmiki thought that the mainstream
literature is far away from the reality. Especially, the form of poetry which is much artificial and phony because it is lacking the harsh reality of the rural society:

> Literature can only imagine hell. For us the rainy season was a living hell. This terrible suffering of village life has not even been touched upon by the epic poets of Hindi. What a monstrous truth that is. (24)

The presentation of reality is just an imitative mode for the upper-caste writers. But for the Dalit writers it is a reinterpretation of own experienced reality. This is a basic difference one cannotice in the presentation of reality in the literary creations of the Dalits and of the non-Dalits.

Valmiki was the first person from his community to pass Secondary examinations. The author had experienced goodness of the non-Dalit teacher Baburam Tyagi as Valmiki said that he ‘was fortunate to receive his love and guidance. He often encouraged me to participate in debates. He taught us Hindi and helped improve my grasp of the language. The credit for the interest I developed in Hindi goes to Baburamji.’ (28) Then, author has revealed firsthand oppression at the hands of non-Dalit teacher. The author had scored good marks in all subjects except Chemistry practical paper. The reason was that he was not allowed to do experiments in the lab by the non-Dalit teacher. Thus, he failed in the Intermediate examination. Then Valmiki got admission in DAV Inter College, Dehradun. This was a turning point in his life. Here, he came in contact with literature of Dr. Ambedkar:

> Dr. Ambedkar’s life-long struggle had shaken me up. . . I proceeded to read all of Ambedkar’s books that I found in the library.
My reading of these books had awakened my consciousness. After reading Ambedkar, I had realized that by naming the untouchables Harijans, Gandhi had not helped them to join the national mainstream, but had saved the Hindus from becoming a minority. Guarded their interests, in fact.

A new word, ‘Dalit’, entered my vocabulary, a word that is not a substitute for ‘Harijan’, but an expression of rage of millions of untouchables. The deeper I was getting into this literature, the more articulate my rage became. It was this literature that had given me courage. (72-73)

In the course of time, the author got job as an apprentice in Ordinance Factory at Dehradun. When he informed about his decision to do job, his father was very much delighted and said, ‘At last you have escaped “caste”.’ (77-78) He was sent for further training at Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh. Here, he read books on Marxist ideology and exposed to world literature of Chekhov, Victor Hugo, Tolstoy and many more.

Then he went to Bombay. Here, he came in contact with Marathi Dalit literature. Further, he got opportunity to know the Dalit Panther Movement. This affected the author and he started active participation in the Dalit activism. To spread awareness among Dalits he formed a theatre group under the name Meghdoot Natya Samstha. The institute became popular for its active performances of plays on street and on stage. It also took active interest in organised exhibitions. Under the active leadership of Valmiki the institute had given progressive commitment about Dalit awareness.

In the course of time, the author understood that literature would be a more effective means to reach to the issues of Dalits. It would also expose the atrocities against the Dalits.
Further, it would be a powerful weapon in fight against injustices of the orthodox Hindu society. He has created literature of protest and contributed ‘to the Dalit movement through his progressive and powerful writings, which demand for redefinitions of almost every component of social structure and its philosophical justifications.’ (Sharma P. 137) The firsthand experiences of Mr. Valmiki are the experiences of every Dalit. Dalit wants a dignified human status, being a human. After independence the conditions of the Dalits are changing gradually but still the status of human being is not obtained. Even after independence and constitutional rights, caste-based discriminations still exist. The firsthand painful experiences being Dalit is expressed towards the end of the autobiography:

Times have changed. But there is something somewhere that continues to irk. I have asked many scholars to tell me why Savarnas hate Dalits and Shudras so much? The Hindus who worship trees and plants, beasts, and birds, why are they so intolerant of Dalits? . . . The moment they find out your caste, everything changes. The whispers slash your veins like knives. . .

Why is my caste my only identity? Many friends hint at the loudness and arrogance of my writings. They insinuate that I have imprisoned myself in a narrow circle. They say that literary expression should be focused on the universal; a writer ought not to limit himself to a narrow, confined terrain of life. That is, my being Dalit and arriving at a point of view according to my environment and my socioeconomic situation is being arrogant. Because in their eyes, I am only an SC, the one who stands outside the door. (Valmiki 134)
The journey of life from childhood to the middle-age of the writer was a struggle for identity, dignity, equality, and solidarity. His life-story is a representative struggle of every Dalit. The suggestion that Valmiki gives in his autobiography to Dalits is that the struggle for identity is a long struggle. Awareness being a Dalit gives force to fight for their rights. As author suggests:

Now I can take it with the attitude that it is a social disease that I am contending with. . . We need an ongoing struggle and a consciousness of struggle, a consciousness that brings revolutionary change both in the outside world and in our hearts, a consciousness that leads the process of social change. (132)

Daya Pawar, a Marathi Dalit writer in his autobiography *Baluta* has presented the humiliation of Dalits by the hands of the orthodox upper-caste. It is commonly found in the Dalit writings. Shameless, mucky, and ugly words are frequently used for the Dalits as if they were no human beings. Such a painful world of the Dalits is portrayed in *Baluta*. The worst experience of being alien is felt by Pawar as the he is a Dalit. This experience is aptly worded in his autobiography. How the Dalits are humiliated can be understood by the firsthand experience of the writer:

Even a shaven widow would go for her share of the harvest along with the rest of the Mahars . . . . They [the non-Dalit farmers] would say, ‘You Mahars, you lazy sons of bitches, you’re always first to ask for your share. Think it’s your father’s grain, do you?’ (Pawar 86-87)
Pawar has interpreted another incident of inhumanity of the non-Dalits. He depicted that it was a duty of Mahar (Dalit) to collect taxes from the villagers and to take them to the taluka town. ‘This collective tax was called a patti.’ (87) This collected money was being paid to the clerk who was an orthodox Brahmin. But this shallow-minded clerk was a mean person. Because of him the old widow who had paid collected tax yet she had to suffer. Further, she is accused of embezzling the money. She is imprisoned for two or three months for the crime which she has not committed. It is a unique example of vicious behaviour of the non-Dalits towards the Dalits. This meanness of the clerk is depicted by Pawar in following words:

She gave the patti to the clerk, but forgot to take a receipt. The clerk has no humanity in him. The next day the old woman comes running to the kacheri for the receipt. The clerk is Brahmin. He maintains a complete blank about what has happened. She returns to the village beating her breast in despair. Of course, she is duly accused of and tried for embezzling the money. . . She is handcuffed and brought to the taluka town. The crime of embezzling the village patti is established in court. The clerk washes his hands off the affair and goes scot-free. She serves a two- or three-month sentence and returns. (87)

The worst meanness of the orthodox Hindus is presented in the autobiography. The hatred of non-Dalits is visible in their actions when the case is a Dalit. The constitution has abolished untouchability. But the autobiography presents that it is practiced in democratic India. The irrational approaches of the non-Dalits are presented in the memoir. ‘The Mahar women’s shadow fell on Maruti on their way to and from the well. The god was polluted. So one day the villagers closed the road to us.’ (90) As a result, the Dalits had to take other path to the well which was not only a mile away but the course was also muddy. But the Dalits
were conscious enough to raise their voice against the inhuman dealings of the non-Dalits. Their protest resulted in a quarrel between the Dalits and non-Dalits. But the issue was settled as the ‘new mamlatdar, a Christian, was transferred to the taluka. This Christian mamlatdar was no other than a former Mahar. He understood the Mahar’s agonies.’ (90)

Thus, Daya Pawar’s autobiography presents Dalit culture, Dalit life and Dalit sensibility faithfully. The horrifying realities presented in the work of Dalit world are worse than nightmare. It also presents the consciousness of Dalits for their identity, dignity and equality.

Bama is an eminent Dalit Christian Woman writer. Her Karukku, the rise of Dalit Feminism is an authentic mirror of reality. In this Dalit autobiography, the harrowing experiences of her childhood are reinterpreted. It is appreciated internationally. This extraordinary Dalit work of hers is enjoying first high rank radical feminist sensibility. In this highly appealing Dalit masterpiece, she has reinterpreted how a Dalit woman is Dalit amongst the Dalits. It is because the pains and sufferings of the Dalit women are more relentless than the Dalit men. The reasons for that are the caste-based and gender-based discriminations.

Unlike the conventional autobiographical story, the journey of Bama’s life is not a complete story of success. Bama’s existence as a nun is tortured and burned by caste, religion and gender. Thus, Bama does not follow the non-Dalits’ way of conventional writing. Karukku is something more than a story of pain and suffering of a Dalit woman. It is a harsh and bitter reality of a victimised Dalit soul. It deals not only with the cruelty of the non-Dalits
towards the Dalit Christians but also exposes worse treatment within the Catholic Church towards the Dalit Christians.

The cruelty and inhuman attitudes of upper-caste orthodox have moved Bama to fight for the Dalits. To fight properly and peacefully, she becomes a nun. As a nun she is dedicated to social service. She is also a religious minded. So, she cannot accept the way the convents are running by the non-Dalit nuns. Bama’s verdict is jolted when she learns that the Catholic institutions are filled up of caste hatred and prejudices and not with love and equality.

Bama has depicted in her autobiography that Dalit Christians are not allowed to sing in the church choir. They are also forced to sit away from the non-Dalit Christians. Further, the cruelty of the non-Dalit Christians is noted by her that the Dalit Christians are not allowed to bury dead bodies of their dearer one’s in the cemetery within the village, behind the church. But they have to use different graveyard. This resulted into her coming back to live the life of a Dalit woman.

In the democratic India, the inhuman practices of untouchability are found. The memoir presents the same abolished practices of untouchability. The non-human, irrational, and age-old prejudices of the non-Dalits have been experienced by Bama for the first time when she was a student of third standard. While going to home from the school, she saw an elder Dalit man from her street was holding a small packet of snacks. She laughed at the elder because he had held the packet with the help of string. He gave it to a Naicker, upper-caste
Hindu without touching the non-Dalit or the packet. She told that incident to her Annan, elder brother. Unlike Bama, Annan did not laugh. This surprised Bama. Annan explained her that the elder from our street was a parayan, a Dalit and the Naickers were the non-Dalits. The upper-caste Hindus do not touch anything that is touched by the Dalits.

It was the first incident of humiliation witnessed by the writer which filled her with a sense of irrationality and inhumanity of the shallow-minded Hindus. Bama is shown right way to find human status by Annan:

Because we are born in the paraya jati, we are never given any honour or dignity with respect. We are stripped of all that. But if we study and make progress, we can throw away these indignities. So study with care, learn all you can. If you are always ahead in your lessons, people will come to you of their own accord and attach themselves to you. Work hard and learn. (Bama 15)

Her brother’s suggestion about study and economic progress had changed her. Since then Bama has taken study seriously. As a result, she had maintained her first rank throughout her student life. Yet, being a Dalit she felt humiliation. Wherever she went, she experienced the ignominy from the non-Dalits. When she got financial grants and special tuitions offered from government to the Dalits, she felt humiliation more than consolation because such grants and tuitions expose her caste identity. But she was strong enough to bear
such stress. She completed her graduation. She wanted to become a teacher so she completed her B.Ed.

Then she joined convent. In the convent, she finds that the nuns working there have inhuman attitude towards the Dalit children. The nuns are verbally humiliating the Dalit children. This incident has moved Bama. And she has decided to become a nun to serve the Dalit children. But, the Tamil Nadu Christian order of church is of belief that the Dalit women would not be accepted as prospective nuns. She could become nun only when she had accepted in her order that she would give her services when convent asks for it.

Bama joined the convent to serve the Dalit children. She is annoyed when she found that even in the convent the non-Dalits are given more facilities and the Dalits are deprived from those facilities. Besides, the Dalit children are given jobs like washing and cleaning lavatories and sweeping the premise. Not only that the Dalit children are constantly insulted and treated irrationally by the nuns. These nuns firmly believed that ‘low caste people are all degraded in some way. They think we have no more moral discipline nor cleanliness nor culture.’ (22-23)

Bama was, for the first time, shaken from the belief of the Christian religion. The teaching and preaching of the Bible is forced on the Dalit children by the nuns. Unlike Christ, the nuns have not put into practice the preaching of the Bible in dealing of everyday life. Rather they have accepted age-old inhuman behaviours towards the Dalit children. Ironically
enough, it is compulsory for the Dalit children to attend the Bible classes and memorise the Psalms.

As it is interpreted by Bama that the idea of remaining absent in such classes would be a nightmare to the Dalit children. ‘The cane fell on us with the sharpness of a whip.’ (71) Thus, Bama realised that there is no similarity between humanitarian approach and the practice on name of the Bible in the Convent. ‘There is a great deal of difference between this Jesus and the Jesus who is made known through daily pieties.’ (90)

With broken heart and tormented mind, Bama has left the asphyxiate life of nun and started the life of a Dalit woman to devote herself and her life for the services of the Dalits. The writer presents her anger thus:

It was only after my sojourn with them that I understood the lack of humanity in their piety. They speak in an empty way of devotion, renunciation, the Holy Spirit, God's vocation, poverty, chastity and obedience; they lead lives which remind me only of Pharisees, Sadducees and High Priests who appear in the Bible. If Jesus were to appear today he would question them much more sharply and severely than he did before. And even if he were to do so, I am not sure whether they will understand. (Anuradha An Excerpt from Karukku)

Thus, Karukku presents the real world which is harsh, ugly and full of inhumanities of the non-Dalits. At the same time, it also shows, odds of the reality are not strong enough to
stop a Dalit woman. It also presents the Dalit culture and life to the rest of world. At the same time she has exposed to the world the age-old orthodox dealings and treatments of the shallow-minded and orthodox Christians. The book presents Bama’s experiences of being a Dalit in different areas of her life. These experiences of hers let her remark the following statement:

Are Dalits not human beings? Do they not have common sense? Do they not have such attributes as a sense of honour and self-respect? Are they without any wisdom, beauty, dignity? What do we lack? (Bama 24)

Thus, Bama’s Karukku, a world-wide illustrious work has made Dalit literature rich and thus presents Dalit identity.

Balbir Madhopuri, a Panjabi poet and autobiographer is a Chamar, (a Dalit Caste) by caste has written the first Panjabi Dalit autobiography Changiya Rukh: Against the Night. It represents the world the social isolation, inner anguish, traumas, humiliation on one hand and fights for identity, dignity, achievement, and hope of the Dalit writer on the other.

The Punjabi title Changiya Rukh is used by the writer is a metaphor for the Dalits whose growth and development has been robbed and garroted by the Hindu’s caste based discrimination. According to Harish K. Puri, ‘Changiya Rukh means a tree lopped from the top, slashed and dwarfed.’(Changiya, xiii)
Writer’s love for poetry is reflected in his autobiography as the words are arranged in such way that it looks like prose in poetry. It presents his life story since his childhood up to his middle-aged life.

The writing style of this autobiography is different as it is not written in traditional way of writing autobiography. Writer’s firsthand experiences and of his community is presented in form of stories which are depicted in an appealing manner.

Balbir Madhopuri has presented the history of Dalit life of the village in particular and of Punjab in general. He has written caste-based prejudices of the Madhopuri village. He has depicted that the non-Dalits of the village wanted the autobiographer to be a farm labourer as their forefathers were. This creates anguish in the mind of the Dalit writer. This inner anguish comes out in form of Changiya Rukh: Against the Night. The autobiographer’s life at village Madhopuri in Punjab is narrated in it.

The book opens with geographical description of rivers and places of Punjab. Since their childhood atrocities are experienced by the Dalits and Madhopuri is not an exception. He has presented the prejudiced behaviors of the orthodox Jats, upper-caste in Punjab. The Dalit autobiography first focuses on objective narration and then subjective narration. There is no exception in Changiya Rukh: Against the Night. The narration of atrocities is common in Dalit literature and is realistically presented in the memoir:

If low-caste boy were to come out on the lanes of the village, all bathed and dressed in new clothes, his hair combed, on or the other of the Jats sitting under the tree would get up and throw mud on him. If he protested, he
was sure to be beaten up. If an untouchable appeared in the village dressed in new clothes, he was certain to be given a beating on the pretext that the low castes were trying to become the equals of the higher castes; no one knew or could predict when such an incident would occur and where. (Madhopuri 4)

Madhopuri has presented that Dalits were conscious enough not to surrender any threat or atrocity of the non-Dalits. Further, Dalits were aware of their dignity. They would not ready to do work at the cost of their dignity. When zamindar (landlord) tried to threaten the Dalits, Banta, Madhopuri’s uncle did not afraid of them:

‘Fine! You will find out at the police station. I’ll see you there. You are talking rubbish and so arrogantly!’ ‘Thoo-thoo’ threatened us again.

‘Threaten someone else; those days are gone when all of them scraped and bowed before you,’ . . . (31)

Poverty is authentically portrayed in the autobiography. Madhopuri has presented how he and his sister-in-law went to collect meal at the houses of the non-Dalits. Those non-Dalits humiliate the author and his sister-in-law by throwing food at them:

Leaving my younger sister at home and picking up a small thali and cloth, I set off with my sister-in-law . . . we would go to the houses of these zamindars, sit in their courtyards, and put out our bowls for rotis. Their women threw the rotis from top and we would adroitly catch them. The dal and vegetables were also ladled out from above into our bowls, and sometimes blistering hot splashes fell on our feet. (33)
Time and again, though constitution of India has abolished untouchability forever. In many parts of Indian society it is practiced. This very fact is presented in the autobiography. Madhopuri has narrated anguish of his father. He remembered how hard his father worked in the fields of landlord to grown grains. And the same grains when ripen, could not be touched by the Dalits; because it defiled if the Dalit touched them:

I had seen my father storing the grain in the granaries and bins at Iqbal Singh’s house, and heard him mutter, ‘Today, we walk barefoot on this mound of grain, but once it is stored, we would not be allowed to touch it, our touch contaminates it.’ Who will let us come in here tomorrow!’ (33)

Use of regional vernacular is one of the distinctive elements of the Dalit writings. Madhopuri has written the autobiography in the same way. Use of bitter-tongue through his Daadi (grandmother) adds mark of authenticity in the autobiography. His Daadi is very bold personality and could scold anyone who tries to get nasty with her. She even not spares Tai Taro, the non-Dalit woman. Even Tai Taro has to shut her mouth:

Daadi’s fair, wrinkled face was red with fury. . . . As he passed by me, he said, “Satto has many lovers, some sweepers and other cobblers! I say, Satto may be your favourite mare”—bastard!’ Daadi banged her stick on the ground, and the ‘thak-thak’ of the stick sounded like and assertion of her anger and pride. It seemed to me that she had an inexhaustible treasure of sharp and bitter words. . .

‘You are always ridiculing one and all, you sharp one. You start babbling about things, without learning the facts.’ Daadi scolded Tai, shutting
her up. It had to be accepted that Tai Taro also did not behave saucily with Daadi. (41-42)

From his village he moved to Delhi. He thought that he would not face such caste-based discrimination there but in vain. Even the capital of India is not free from the prejudices and atrocities of the non-Dalits towards the Dalits. He experienced similar humiliations in Delhi as he used to in his village. Then he realised the importance of writing. He used writing as a powerful weapon to fight for his identity, equality and dignity. His autobiography ends with his decision of writing about Dalits’ problems, sorrow, sufferings, etc. Thus, he wrote his life story:

I realized that life was a struggle and there was no escape from it. If I wanted to expand my horizons, I needed to put all the tumult within me into my writings . . . (209)

Thus, Madhopuri’s narration skill is admirable. The autobiography exposes the reality of Indian caste-based discrimination. The book presents tyrannies, atrocities, ignominy, and inhumanity of the orthodox and shallow minded non-Dalits. Even after independence and though it is prohibited in constitution of India, the practices of the untouchability prevails in India even today.

Thus, throughout India, the conditions of the oppressed are very pathetic. At every step of their life, Dalits experience caste-based discrimination. The suffering and pain of Dalits are beyond verbal or written expressions. Dalit autobiography writers have presented genuine portrayal of saga of oppressed. Unlike the mainstream autobiography, Dalit
autobiography presents a different taste in the field of literature. The Dalit autobiographies expose Dalit culture, Dalit life and Dalit sensibility.

Thus, Dalit autobiography has played very significant role in retrieving Dalits’ human identity through literature.

5.3 Plays

The literary genre play is used to represent the experiences of Dalits along with their world and culture. It is effectively used to establish Dalit identity. Dalit writers from all over India have used the form to enrich Dalit Literature. Realism and authentic presentation of Dalit life and culture are also presented in the plays of regional languages like Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil, etc.

Dr. Ambedkar had earnestly stated that be educated, be united and be ready for struggle. This teaching and preaching of Dr. Ambedkar is solely accepted by Dalits. Harish Mangalam, the Gujarati Dalit playwright has focused on the same appeal of Dr. Ambedkar in his one act play *Put the Switch On!*. The play is in four scenes. The playwright has often used colloquial tongue. The theme of the play is the Ambedkarite thoughts. The play also presents that Dalits of present time are ready to fight for their rights and dignity. It also explains the strength of unity and how unity brings you victory.
The play opens with the non-Dalit Mukhi’s dialogue who wishes to have electricity only in their area and not in the Dalits’. The electricity is given to the village under the ‘Jeevan Jyot’ scheme of the government. The poles for electricity are already established in the non-Dalits’ area. So an application is given by Vijay, the educated Dalit to the T.D.O. It states that electricity must be given to the Dalits too and poles must be fixed in the Dalits’ area too.

The character of Mukhi is that of orthodox Hindu who does not let Dalits have their rights and facilities provided by the government to the Dalits. But Amthabhi, the non-Dalit friend of Mukhi is having knowledge of empowerment of the Dalits warns Mukhi before taking any action against the Dalits; Act I, Scene i:

MUKHI: The whole village is with us. What can the harijans do? There’s no scope for conflict.

AMTHABHAI: (Cautiously) You can’t tell. Be careful. Times have changed. We can’t have our way any more. Nowadays education has empowered everybody. The village may be on our side. What about the government? (Glances at the mukhi) (Mangalam 77)

Unlike the older generation, the younger generation of the Dalits are not ready to be bullied by the non-Dalits. Education has brought change among the younger generation of Dalits. This generation of Dalits is not ready to become victims rather they are ready to be
predator. Mangalam has presented this difference through the characters of Vijay, Ghelo, Dulo, Mafo etc., in Act I, Scene ii:

DULO: That is right. *(Looking at Mafa)* We can’t allow the Patels to bully us. . . .

VIJAY: *(Firmly).* Why won’t they? *(As if lost in deep thought)* Babasaheb has said “Acquire education, be united and then prepare for struggle.” We have acquired some education, we will now have to unite and fight for our rights. No turning back. *(Pauses. Everyone seriously listens to him.)* United we stand. *(Smiles.)* Divided we fall. . . .

DULO: *(Upset)* I don’t trust the kanbis at all. It’s not wise to go unarmed. Go with rods, sticks. We can’t afford to pay with our lives. Electricity will come when it will. Understand? *(The youth laugh.)* (79)

In the Scene iii and iv of Act I, the T.D.O. has arranged a meeting with the villagers and declares that he cannot do anything against the government rules. So the electricity must be provided to the Dalits’ colony. Here, non-Dalits Mukhi, Amthabhai and others try to find some middle way so that the electricity runs in their area the very night. But T.D.O. refuses to do so as it is out side government law. This is the first time the Dalits test victory and non-Dalits have tested defeat. Here, the playwright has highlighted how education can make difference:
VIJAY: Ours (All look at Vijay.) It is a plea for justice. (The village Patels and mukhi glance angrily at Vijay.) As long as their vas does not get electric-poles your village will have to do without electricity. . .

T.D.O.: (Composed). Nothing can be done. I must follow the rules. (Walks away firmly.) Arre, where’s the driver? (The dalits are happy.) . . .

PASHO: (Loudly). Justice has prevailed. . .

MAFO: (to Chamankaka). . . It’s first time I’ve seen them defeated. (80-81)

In the play, Vijay is an educated young Dalit who is a representative of the Ambedkarite thoughts. He emphasises on unity as appealed by Dr. Ambedkar. He is of opinion that if Dalits work together in unity, they will certainly get victory in every field. The power of unity is also understood by the older generation. In the play, the character of Chamankaka is a representative of the older generation. Though the Dalits got victory, they are conscious enough of the atrocities of the non-Dalits. But, the younger generation of Dalits do not afraid of the atrocities of the non-Dalits. As a matter of fact, the young Dalits are ready to bully non-Dalits:

PASHO: Vijay, the application has made a difference but I don’t trust this caste a bit.

VIJAY: Pasho, Deva, Mafa, Ghela, listen all of you. Trust them not, we will have to be cautious. Don’t be afraid if something happens tomorrow.
If we are united we shall succeed. . . We are not going to get electricity easily. . . And even after that, we’ll have to fight against exploitation . . . Otherwise our next generation won’t forgive us. (Pauses) (82)

Defeat made the non-Dalits angry and restless. And the best they can do out of anger is the atrocities on Dalits. Same reaction is seen in the play too. Vali, the Dalit woman is beaten and her earthen-pot is broken by Moni, non-Dalit woman. They try to send message to the Dalits by beating an innocent Dalit woman that non-Dalits will make lives of the Dalits worse than Hell. And Dalits will ready to be victimised by the non-Dalits. Listening to Valikaki’s shouting, all Dalits gather and they decide to fight back with all their might. Vijay, Mafa, Devo, Nagar and other Dalit men and women get ready with whatever they have to beat and kill the non-Dalits.

One thing the non-Dalits cannot notice is that now the Dalits are also ready to kill rather than to be killed. They are not meek sufferer anymore. Mangalam has presented that now Dalits can act like predator and by no means tolerate any kind of inhuman and irrational treatments and injustices at the hands of the non-Dalits. This tit for tat attitude is aptly presented in the play in Scene v of Act I:

MAFO: Kill....Kill....

VIJAY: Fall upon them like locusts. Nobody should be able to enter.

Better to kill one or two and die than take a beating. . .
VIJAY: There’s the mukhi . . . There’s Arjun... The whole village is here.

ALL: Come out the neliyu diyors. Death waits for you here.

VIJAY: See how unity works wonders. They’ve learnt a lesson. (84)

Thus, Mangalam has presented Ambedkarite values in the play. Playwright has tried his best to explain that Dalits can have victory when they unite. The struggle of Dalits in the play is for identity, equality and dignity. The one act play is translated from Gujarati in English by Dr. Rupalee Burke.

K. A. Gunasekaran, the Tamil Dalit playwright in his play *Scape Goats* has presented Dalit awareness through the conversation between Dr. Ambedkar and Mulk Raj Anand. In this one act play, the playwright has used an interview of Dr. Ambedkar which is recorded in video cassette. The interview played a significant role to aware the Dalits that they can change the worst condition by acquiring education. The play opens with the conversation between Dr. Ambedkar and Mulk Raj Anand. In scene one both were discussing the issues of casted-based discrimination:

AMBEDKAR: Buddha discussed with the Brahmins about each one of their beliefs. The Brahmins and stowed everyone as outcastes. They say that it was God who had ordained the four Varnas Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Buddha asked them
what they thought about Man. By virtue of his birth into a family which buries corpses of dead cattle he becomes an untouchable. To the Hindus all tribals [tribal people] are barbarians. (Gunasekaran 250-51)

Gunasekaran has used Paraiyan as bounded dark skinned group, the Dalits and *Poonool*, the Brahmins. They appeared in between conversation. They show the reality of the Dalits with their misery, sorrow, pain etc. Unlike the traditional way of presenting play, it is quite different experience for the audience or reader to see or read a play.

As conversation proceed further, Dr. Ambedkar explains, how men became Dalits. In between the conversation the *Poonool* (group of the orthodox Brahmins) are beating the Dalits. It shows the domination of the Brahmins. It shows the atrocities of the non-Dalits. It also narrates that how for the sake of power and status Dalits are sacrificed. And the same sacrifice is justified with the help of religion and religious scriptures. The Dalits’ pain and inhuman sufferings are presented faithfully:

As the bounded dark skinned group comes rolling, the Poonool group shows actions of hitting them as a symbol of domination. . . The Poonool men mount on the backs of the enslaved men and come around the stage. . . (251)

The playwright has presented songs in the play which is a special effect of the play. He has presented songs to get desired effect upon the reader and audience. The song presents the
alien conditions of Dalits. It also remarks that in the rigid Hindu caste-system, Dalits have no life at all. Their social status is made so low that their life cannot be considered as life at all. In orthodox Hindu society, the animals have life but Dalits have none. The song of Dalits shows the pain and suffering of the Dalits:

In the four Varna caste

We are not human beings

We became worse than dogs

There’s no life here

We’ve become the outcastes (1-5, 251)

Ages-old suffering, pain, atrocity, ignominy etc. are presented realistically in the play. Dalits’ painful conditions which are worse than animal, are an authentic portrayal in the play. At the same time the worst atrocities of the Brahmins to dominate others are faithfully presented in the play.

Satire on the orthodox Brahmins is presented through the ritual incident. One wheel of the goddess Amman’s chariot is broken so the Brahmins who know Vedas say that someone from the Dalits must have committed sin so this incident happened. So they decide to perform ritual. During the discussion of the Brahmins the Dalits laugh that creates anger among the
Brahmins. Out of anger the Brahmins decide to pour cow-dung water in mouth of the Dalits who laughed. This irrational and inhuman practice of the orthodox Brahmins is faithfully presented in play:

HEAD MAN: Who laughed? Such childish behaviour is the reason for mother’s anger.

BOUNDED MEN: Two persons pull out of the bounded men and whip him. They pour cow dung water into his mouth. (254)

The inhuman actions of Brahmins on the name of religious ritual and religion are exposed in the play. At the same time, the superstition regarding the spirits and ghost are also criticised. Further, a woman’s body is possessed by goddess Amman and she asks for human sacrifice within the eight days. It is decided that for the betterment and goodness of the village, the Dalit man will be sacrificed. So there is a discussion in the Dalit Street among the Dalits. The Dalit groups are opposing the human sacrifice. But one of the Dalits Uduman is trying to convince the Dalits that the sacrifice of the Dalits is for the village and not for the one person. Dalit Chinnandi’s sacrifice will be given is decided by the Brahmins, but he manages to escape from the village with his wife. The discussion of the Dalits is showing the awareness among the Dalits. The playwright has given hint that the Dalits will not suffer meekly:

WIFE OF CHINNANDI: Ayya! My husband is going to be sacrificed to Amman so that the Temple car would run. Is there no one in our race to question this atrocity? . . .
CHINNANDI: Today I am the target. What is the guarantee that you will not be targeted tomorrow? We must all organize together and tell the upper caste men that the decision to sacrifice one of the Paraiyans is wrong. Come let’s go. (256)

The escape of Chinnandi and his wife is good for them. But, because of fleeing of the couple Uduman now becomes the scapegoat of sacrifice. The writer has shown the oppressed condition of the Dalit women through the character of Uduman’s wife. Uduman did not want to give his life for sacrifice so he tells the Brahmins that they can sacrifice his wife instead of him. The orthodox Brahmins become ready to sacrifice Uduman’s wife. She resists but in vain:

POONOOL GROUP 2: Uduman Paraiyan’s wife must be sacrificed. (259)

The sacrifice of the Dalit woman is very tragic. It shows that in the society the orthodox Hindus have used and killed the Dalits for their purposes. This killing is given the mask of religious ritual and demand of the gods and goddess. The sacrifice is of the Dalit woman shows the worst cruelty of the orthodox Hindus. The playwright has highlighted the worst conditions of the women in India in general and of the Dalit women in particular. Thus, the discrimination against women by men is also presented in the play.
The play ends with the message of Dr. Ambedkar. The play is based on the interview of Dr. Ambedkar by Mulk Raj Anand. Dr. Ambedkar has given message to the Dalits in the interview that only goats are sacrificed by the Brahmins and lions. So be lion and not the goat:

ANAND: What is your message for the rejected?

AMBEDKAR: My only message to the untouchables is, ‘be a Lion’!

Hindus sacrifice goats to the goddess Kali for power. Not lions. (260)

Thus, the play Scape Goats presents writers love for poetry. The play appeals the Dalits that if Dalits want to live they have to unite and have to raise their voice of protest for their rights being humans. And if circumstances demand Dalits have to be lion and not the scapegoat. The use of original interview of Dr. Ambedkar gives the play desired effect of awareness.

Thus, in the plays, novels and autobiographies, the Dalit writers have presented the reality of Indian oppressed Dalit masses. On one hand pain, suffering, anger etc. being Dalit are faithfully presented, and on the other the distinctive literary taste of Dalit writings is presented in the Dalit plays. In all the three major literary forms –novel, autobiography and play, the writers have consciously tries to set Dalits human identity.


